

Sunlaw proposed to build a 550-megawatt power plant in South Gate, a heavily Latino, working-class community on the industrial outskirts of Los Angeles. A power plant hasn't been built in Los Angeles County in 20 years. Even now when California has a desperate need to increase its energy supply, 65% of townspeople turned down the plant in a referendum held on March 6.

The proposed plant became a contentious issue in the local election, with **vocal opposition** led by the local mayor, Raul Moriel, who, along with the vice mayor, staged a **hunger strike** to protest the project. They were supported by a Huntington Park-based group, Communities for a Better Environment, which held **rallies** and **marches**.

Fear was instilled by **mailers**, from an unidentified source, warning citizens of health dangers – even though natural gas, a relatively clean energy source, would have been used. Opponents went **door-to-door** falsely telling voters that the project was a nuclear power plant. Environmental racism was the other issue raised.

The Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council were prepared to support the plant, Alaniz says, but were unwilling to say so publicly because they didn't want to alienate the local group.

Sunlaw decided to withdraw the proposal, even though the California Energy Commission was not bound by the referendum in its scheduled vote on the permit in August. Sunlaw president Wayne Gould said he did not want to build in a community where it was unwanted.

The surprise ending, however, is that 19 cities have invited Sunlaw to build in their communities – and South Gate has now changed its mind and invited the company back. Perhaps two rolling blackouts and higher utility bills had some effect.

How could citizens do this after the company promised to provide electricity to the town at low rates for the long term? The community would also have benefited from \$1 million in neighborhood improvements, \$160,000 a year in scholarships and as much as \$8 million in annual tax revenues.

## ITEM OF INTEREST FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Denny Griswold's Memory Honored Through Endowment Fund.** The late Denny Griswold, colorful co-founder of Women Executives in PR (NYC) and founder and long-time editor of *PR News*, is being honored posthumously by an endowment fund established by WEPR in her name. "Denny was a true pioneer," says WEPR pres. Deborah Radman. "She had a very clear vision of what pr should be and promoted it tirelessly." The Denny Griswold Education Endowment Fund will strive to expand advanced pr education for practitioners as well as academically superior pr students. "To ensure that her legacy will live on, we will seek support from all who knew her – and those younger professionals who have followed in the trail Denny blazed."

## WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

**DIED.** Steven H. Chaffee (professor of communications, University of California, Santa Barbara), died May 15 at age 65. He wrote extensively on the role of mass communication in political campaigns. One of

his themes was the role of political conventions in American elections, arguing they offer voters a proper moment to evaluate candidates. Swing voters, he said, viewed conventions as "a kind of job interview by television."

## AWARENESS IS FINE, BUT WHAT IF THE CEO SAYS "SO WHAT?" DESIGNING PROGRAMS THAT CHANGE BEHAVIOR

Publicity is great, but gauging behavioral change is the only way to measure the success of a pr campaign says Patrick McGee, sr counsel, Jackson Jackson & Wagner. "The concern we have in pr is that we get called into the CEO's office and tell him or her about all the great press coverage we got, and the response is, 'So what? How did that help us achieve our strategic objectives? How did that impact the bottom line?'" At that point, he notes, the practitioner should realize it's important to put together a campaign that will affect and measure changes in behavior, not just gain coverage.

McGee, who made his remarks to a crowded room of conference goers at *Bulldog Reporter's & PR Newswire's* "Media Relations 2001," held last week in DC, detailed ways to research and implement a behavioral change model. "It's not academic – it's practical information."

## AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS OFTEN USELESS, SOMETIMES COUNTERPRODUCTIVE

Awareness campaigns – which generate publicity for a given issue – often backfire, says McGee, noting the exhaustive, multi-million-dollar campaign efforts directed at lifestyle changes, he notes. "We still have an increase in obesity, a decline in exercise, no cessation in smoking, continued abuse of alcohol and illicit drug use. Add to that drinking and driving, AIDS and other social ills. Information alone doesn't change behavior."

Awareness also factors little into accountability. "Does information satisfy management's goals? Organizational goals? The need to build relationships?" Many dot.coms have received a lot of publicity but have still gone under. Consider also a hospital facing neighborhood opposition to a proposed expansion. Awareness alone will not assuage the concerns of the community, and may even incite them to protest.

## NO ONE BETTER THAN PR

PR counsel is in a better position than anyone to re-direct organizations, believes McGee. "Who else besides us should be agents of change?" PR has a) communication theories, b) behavioral models, c) a finger on the pulse of key relationships. To start a successful campaign, he advises these guides be in place:

- Understand the importance of being strategic. Behavioral change means you want a target group to do something, *not* do something, or stay out of the way
- Look at several models to help behavioral change
- Follow a case study that illustrates the use of models

"Behavioral change is a big concern for pr. **If we can't show the value of our program to the CEO, stockholders and stakeholders, then we can't show the value of ourselves as practitioners.** And when the time comes for number crunching, we're the ones who'll get crunched."

**K.I.D.S. CAMPAIGN**

McGee says the K.I.D.S. (Kids In A Drug-free Society) campaign provides an example of how to motivate target publics to behave in a certain way. Campaign, implemented in August 1998 by the PRSA Foundation, with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, involved three pieces of research. "Without research, you're working in a vacuum. Research included:

1. **Secondary.** Articles, on-line data, etc., which show that message campaigns are aimed at kids in 3rd grade and in mid-adolescence. Not much is being done to target ages 9-13 – but this was the very group that was ripe for a campaign. They were experiencing first-time exposure to drugs but were still primarily influenced by their parents.
  2. **Environmental Scan.** This shows what parents and kids have to deal with in the culture. "What are the barriers these people are facing? What prevents people from doing what they should do?"
  3. **Primary.** This measures baseline and later, behavior change. There is pre-testing, post-testing, time interval testing and employer feedback.
- **The mission was to "supertarget" kids 9-13 thru their parents.** The hope was that by motivating and empowering parents to talk to their kids about drugs, "tweens" would stay away from substance abuse. Secondary goals included getting organizations and the community to understand what pr can do, and allowing PRSA members an opportunity to learn and practice behavioral pr.
  - **Key Secondary Public – Employers.** The campaign's goal was to get parents to attend five sessions concerning how to communicate with and influence kids. Since research shows that work/life balance issues create the most stress for parents, campaign appealed to major employers to hold sessions in the workplace. This provided rewards for bosses, who could be perceived as champions by employees worried about latch-key kids. Aside from the forums for the sessions, employers could also provide rewards for attendance, and could apply pressure on employees to attend sessions. Other secondary targets included: 1) communities, which could put a stamp of approval on the program and make it part of the culture; 2) PRSA, because local chapters offered needed support; 3) other anti-drug groups, who could work in concert, or at least not feel threatened. The message to them was, "you keep doing what you're doing, we'll cover this angle."

The **Behavioral Change Model** (pr 11/4/96), allowed K.I.D.S. to move publics from 1) **awareness** (word spread about the upcoming meetings) to 2) **latent readiness** ("There's a session coming up. For those of you with kids 9 to 13, mark your calendars"), and finally to 3) the **triggering event** – the big sign-up and the sessions themselves. **Secondary supports were provided by a pilot group of opinion leaders within the organization** ("If Sally's going, it has to be pretty worthwhile") and relationships that were made thruout the sessions. Members of the groups became friendly with one another and for one session, kids attended with parents, building a bridge with them. Other components included brown-bag lunches, e-mails from management to participants, recognition and rewards, etc.

**Follow-up research** showed that change had been affected. Surveys, filled out anonymously and checked for biases, indicated that parents did increase talks about drugs with their tweens, implementing communication strategies learned in the sessions. Non-participants were also questioned, and barriers were revealed (some, for example, were concerned that attendance would raise suspicion about their kids). McGee says the model can also be used to dissuade publics from a certain behavior.

**2000 WAS PR'S BEST YEAR TO DATE – HUGE GROWTH IN DEMAND, ESPECIALLY FOR SPECIALIZED SERVICES**

PR is becoming an increasingly lucrative field. A survey conducted by the Council of Public Relations Firms found that in the U.S., industry revenues for the year 2000 grew 33% over 1999 to \$3+ billion. Worldwide revenues were at \$4.6 billion. "Revenues" are defined as fees for pr services, income from related services such as research, internet and employee communication, and mark ups of production services and other materials.

**Increase in Revenue by Sectors:**

1. technology, 46%
2. financial products, services, 37%
3. industrial, 36%
4. government, 36%
5. healthcare, 30%
6. consumer and retail, 22%
7. professional services, 5%

**Greatest Growth in 5 Markets:**

1. Austin, TX, 132%
2. Sacramento, CA, 68%
3. Seattle, WA, 60%
4. Dallas, TX, 53%
5. Boston, MA, 49%

**SOURING ECONOMY DOESN'T DISCOURAGE CLIENTS**

The economy weakened in 2000, but the need for pr did not. Demand increased as companies turned to practitioners to explain to investors, suppliers and employees their strategies for adjusting to change. More customer service programs added pr to the mix to offset cuts in advertising and marketing communication.

The study, which surveyed 316 pr firms, also found that smaller firms lead growth, with 57 firms expanding over 50%. "This reinforces the dynamism in the entrepreneurial sector of the pr market even after a decade of consolidation thru mergers and acquisitions." Furthermore, pr staff increased overall by 25%.

**GROWTH STYMIED IN 2001**

There has been a decline in revenues in '01, noticeable in first quarter revenues. "Technology sector revenues are expected to be less than they were last year, but the industry is still projecting high single-digit revenue growth for the year," said Bergen. The Council predicts that healthcare will lead the next growth spurt, and public affairs practice should expand, too, with the new Administration and new regulatory agenda.

(For more info, contact the Council at 877/773-4767)

**"The pr industry is arguably the healthiest of all marketing and professional services,"** says Council pres. Jack Bergen. "More and more, pr firms are being called upon to provide content, clarity and credibility in areas ranging from healthcare and personal finance to regulatory issues and safety." Additionally, gov't agencies at all levels are looking to pr to produce good info on key public policy and social issues.

**COMMUNITY POLITICS NIXES SUNLAW ENERGY'S POWER PLANT**

Don't try to build a power plant in a community where you get caught up in a local election is the lesson learned by Sunlaw Energy Co., says Hill & Knowlton spokesperson, Robert Alaniz.